

Preventing Staged Collision

An anyone who has ever been involved in a vehicle collision knows this is a traumatic experience for everyone involved. However, how would it make you feel if you discovered a collision you were involved in was not an accident? Some collisions are in fact “staged” and are “criminal conspiracies” involving “numerous suspects.” The criminals involved in this crime are intentionally placing motorists and their passengers in harm’s way and extreme risk by staging collisions for their own financial greed.

The most common types of staged collisions motorists will be exposed to are the “Swoop and Squat” and the “Drive Down.” The “Drive Down” also is known as the “Wave On.” In the “Swoop and Squat” criminals maneuver their vehicle in front of a targeted vehicle and slam on the brakes. By doing this radical maneuver, the criminals are attempting to cause the targeted vehicle to collide with the rear of their own vehicle and create an accident (staged collision) where the targeted vehicle appears to be at fault. The “Drive Down” or “Wave On” involves a situation where a targeted vehicle does not have the right-of-way and criminals gesture or “wave” to the targeted motorist offering

the opportunity to proceed ahead of them. When the targeted vehicle proceeds, the criminals purposely drive their vehicle into the targeted vehicle creating an accident (staged collision), attempting to make it appear that the targeted vehicle is at fault.

DRIVING TIPS

The following tips are suggested to protect motorists from staged collisions:

§ If you are involved in a collision on a busy street or highway your first and foremost thought should be your safety and the safety of your passengers. If possible, remove your vehicle from the traffic lanes.

§ Before removing your vehicle, make sure you inform the other motorist involved that you are removing your vehicle for safety reasons and are not attempting to leave the scene of the accident, and that you are not a hit-and-run driver.

§ Once you and your passengers are in a safe place, exchange information with the other motorist involved. Also, be aware of persons at the scene of the collision who

might be potential witnesses. Approach these persons and try to obtain a statement from them of what they saw. Also write down their individual names, addresses and telephone numbers for future reference.

§ Carry a disposable camera in the glove compartment of your vehicle. Take as many pictures of the other vehicle and its passengers as possible. This will help the police detectives investigate your collision case.

§ If you think you have been involved in a staged collision, make sure to count the number of passengers in the other vehicle. If possible, get their individual names, addresses, telephone numbers and driver's license numbers. Often, more people will file claims than were in the vehicle when the collision occurred.

§ Fully insured motorists, driving alone, are the favorite targets of criminals involved in staged collisions. Criminals involved in staged collisions prefer "lone drivers" because "passengers" make good witnesses. Luxury and commercial vehicles often are targeted because they offer the promise of extensive insurance coverage. When driving, be aware of other vehicles around you. Always allow ample space between you and

the vehicle in front of you. Look beyond the vehicle in front of you. If you see a vehicle slowing down in front of you, begin to slow down too. Do not wait for the vehicle in front of you to slow down first.

§ Be very careful when turning from a lane that allows two vehicles to turn simultaneously. Criminals who commit staged collisions often prey on vehicles that cross the centerline, purposely sideswiping a targeted vehicle.

§ Often, "phony witnesses" are positioned near the scene of the staged collision to support the involved criminal's account and to contradict the innocent driver's account of what actually happened. In some instances, criminals inflict injury upon themselves, or they claim to have "hard to dispute" soft-tissue injuries in order to collect on insurance claims.

§ If you suspect you have been involved in a staged collision, immediately report the crime to law enforcement.

Driving is a full-time job. You can reduce your chances of becoming a victim of a staged collision if you apply the aforementioned tips, adhere to the rules of the road and always drive defensively.